

Dream Jobs: Urban planner

By Hailee Romain, adapted by Newsela staff on 06.27.18

Word Count **876**

Level **400L**



Image 1. Lindsay Woodson is an urban planner who specializes in coastal resilience. That means she helps design city spaces to protect urban areas from natural disasters, such as hurricanes. Photo by: Travis Bunt.

Lindsay Woodson grew up in Cleveland. It is a city in Ohio. Ms. Woodson loved to look around her city. She liked to see parks and big buildings.

Now Ms. Woodson is an urban planner. Her job is also called "city planner." Ms. Woodson plans new communities. She designs useful, beautiful spaces. She thinks about what people in cities need.

Ms. Woodson does a special kind of planning. It is called coastal resilience planning. It protects cities from natural disasters. These include big storms, such as hurricanes. A big storm can harm a city. It can destroy roads. It can topple buildings. Resilience means being able to recover quickly. When you recover, you get back to normal. Woodson plans city spaces that can recover after storms.

What do you do as an urban planner?



I dream up new places for people to live, play and work. I design and plan these places. They might be parks or neighborhoods.

City planners come up with ideas. Then we use computers to make pictures of our plans. We bring the idea to life.

Every community is different. Each one has its own history. That means every project is different, too. City planners need to talk with people. That is the best way to learn what they need.

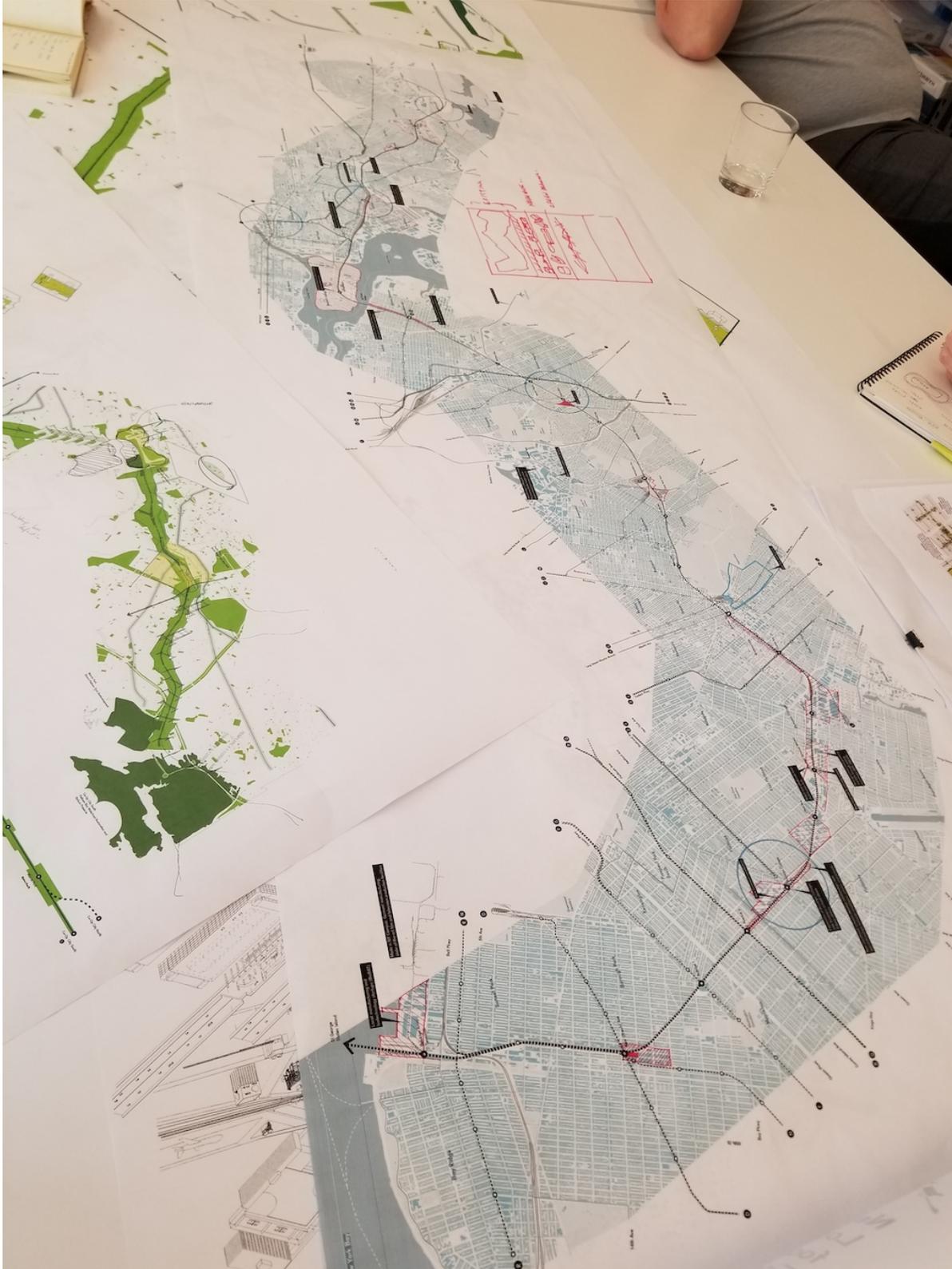
What kinds of projects do you work on?

My work takes me around the world. Right now, I have one project in the Philippines. I also have one in the United States.

The Philippines is a country in Asia. We are planning a new city there. It will host the Southeast Asian Olympics next year! City officials want to build a stadium. They want it to have uses after the Olympics, too.

My other project is in New York. We are planning special parks there. We want the city to be ready for hurricanes. We are planning parks that will be useful during these storms. They can be safe places for people to gather. Or, they can be used to hold supplies.

What made you want to be an urban planner?



I always loved design, art and science. I wanted to be an architect for a long time. I wanted to design buildings.

In 2005, I was in college. That year Hurricane Katrina struck New Orleans, Louisiana. I watched the news about it. The pictures and videos of what happened were scary. New Orleans didn't look like the United States. The city was destroyed. I decided I wanted to help cities to be better prepared for storms like Katrina. I did not want what happened in New Orleans to happen again.

What are the steps for starting a new project?

First, cities ask for ideas for a project. It could be a plan for a new park, for example. Planners turn in their ideas. Then one plan gets chosen. If my company's plan is chosen, we start getting information. We visit the site. We talk with the people there.

The next step is to think up ideas. Then we draw them on the computer. We create a design. Before it is final, we show it to the community. We listen to them. We want to get more ideas from them. Then we finish the final plan.

What is an ordinary day like for you?

My job is different each day. Sometimes I am in the office. I have meetings. I brainstorm and make sketches.

Other times, I am out of the office. I travel. I go all around the United States and overseas, too. Then I take pictures and talk to people. I also take part in community meetings.

What are your favorite and least favorite parts of your job?



I really like to travel to new places. It is great to meet new people. I also love dreaming up better places to live. That part is really fun.

Sometimes it is hard to get feedback. Planners work very hard. We put their feelings into their plans. Sometimes people do not like your ideas. That is not much fun. Still, it is part of the job.

Do you have any advice for kids who want to be city planners?

Learn how to be a good communicator. You have to be able to explain your ideas. You must be curious, too. Ask a million questions! Asking questions is important. Really listen to the answers.

City planners must be creative. But that is not all. They must also care about the people they are making spaces for. As a city planner, you have to understand the needs of these people. That is the only way to design something they will love.

Quiz

- 1 Where is the Olympic event that Lindsay Woodson is helping to plan the host city?
 - (A) United States
 - (B) Philippines
 - (C) England
 - (D) Japan

- 2 What is a reason why city planners need to be good communicators?
 - (A) to be able to explain their ideas
 - (B) to be able to build nicer buildings
 - (C) to be able to save people in disasters
 - (D) to be able to deal with unhappy people

- 3 How is Ms. Woodson's work in New York different from her work in Asia?
 - (A) She is not working with other people in Asia.
 - (B) She is helping to build special parks in Asia.
 - (C) She is not building anything in New York.
 - (D) She is helping to build special parks in New York.

- 4 What caused Ms. Woodson to want to help cities be better prepared for storms?
 - (A) Hurricane Sandy affected New York.
 - (B) A big storm hit Southeast Asia.
 - (C) Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans.
 - (D) A tornado affected a city in Kansas.